

The Jewish Weekly

The Proper Art of Eating and Seeing

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov would say, "I am able to pray without first going to the mikveh, but I am unable to eat, without going to the mikveh. Serving G-d through eating is an extremely elevated form of serving the Creator."

'Serving G-d through eating' doesn't mean that a person can't enjoy his food. He can eat well, but he should strive to have the right intention and mannerism, and say a sincere blessing. It's doable matters like these, which make a world of difference. It turns eating into an act of holiness.

When the Lelover said that proper eating can be a very high path for connecting to G-d, he did not mean that we are discussing planes that are beyond us. One can eat well and enjoy his meals, but it is the details - the intention, the blessing recitations, the manner of eating - which makes all the difference.

There are definitely hardships involved; it isn't easy to break old habits. Someone accustomed to eating hastily will have a hard time learning how to eat properly. Someone who isn't accustomed to saying blessings with focused attention will find it challenging to begin doing so. But G-d doesn't expect from a person something that is beyond his level. Still, everyone is expected to take a step forward from wherever he is, and work towards eating more properly.

One Friday night, Stoliner chasidim were at a zits (chasidic sit-together) and the topic of discussion was the virtue of eating properly. Some were declaring that one shouldn't eat hastily; that one should train himself to eat the food slowly and patiently.

The following morning, there was a kiddush (wine and refreshments) after the Shabbat morning prayers, and hot kugel was being served. The Zitimir Rav was present, and remembering the conversation from the previous night, didn't rush to eat it. Instead, he began cutting his portion of kugel into small pieces, and before he finished he found a pin inside. Had he eaten more quickly, he probably would have swallowed the pin and his life would have been in danger. He used to say that since that time, he always attends the zits. He saw that doing so saved his life.

The Rebbe of Machnovka, Avraham Yehoshua Heschel Twersky, was once a guest in the home of Reb Chaim Yitzchak Cohen. After the soup, the Rebbe thanked his host and said, "It was very tasty."

Reb Chaim Yitzchok was surprised. The Machnovka Rebbe was from the great tzadikim of the generation, and Reb Chaim Yitzchak couldn't imagine that the Rebbe actually tasted the food.

The Rebbe sensed his astonishment and answered wittily, "What do you think? That I'm like a snake, upon which it was decreed that whatever it eats tastes like earth?"

When Reb Chaim Yitzchak realized that the Rebbe tastes food, he wanted to serve the Rebbe something that he thought the Rebbe would certainly enjoy. So what did he do? He brought the Rebbe some ice cream.

The Rebbe didn't know what it was. "Its blessing is shahakol ("That all is brought into being through His word" - a general blessing)," Reb Chaim Yitzchak told him.

After the meal, Reb Chaim Yitzchak asked the Rebbe what he thought of the ice-cream. "It's very good," the Rebbe said, "but why was it served so cold?"

One day after praying, an elderly chasid approached the Machnovka Rebbe. With great respect he inquired about the Rebbe's custom of sitting during the minyan, with his back to the east, facing all the other participants.

"I know that this is the custom of German rabbis and Lithuanian Yeshiva heads," the chasid said. "But Rebbes generally sit facing the eastern wall, like everyone else. May I turn the Rebbe's chair around?"

The Machnovka Rebbe looked at the chasid and replied, "May you be gezunt (healthy)! For twenty years I was in that country [Russia] and they prevented me from seeing other Jews; now I can look at Jews and you want to take this away from me?"

When Rabbi Chaim Twersky, the Chernobyler Rav, would retell this anecdote of the Machnovka Rebbe, he would add that simply looking at another Jew is not enough.

"One has to know how to look," the Rav said. "It isn't enough just to look at another Jew - simply to see his face, two eyes and a mouth. One must look at another Jew and see what he needs, and how you can help him!"

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

It Once Happened...

K'dat Kaiser Wilhelm the Great

By Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenberg, zt"l, the Rav of Konigsberg in Germany, was a talmid of Rav Akiva Eiger, zt"l, and the author of the Sefer HaK'tav V'Hakabalah on Chumash. Rav Yaakov Tzvi was once invited to officiate at the wedding of a girl from a non-religious home.

He told this family that their daughter must agree to follow the requirements necessary for a Bat Yisrael (religious girl) to prepare for her wedding, but the girl refused, and because of this Rav Yaakov Tzvi refused to officiate at the wedding.

This family was very well connected to people in the government, and when the government officials put some pressure on Rav Yaakov Tzvi, he realized that he was being forced to officiate, and he finally relented.

At the wedding, Rav Yaakov Tzvi stood under the Chupah (wedding canopy) and said to the Chattan (groom) for him to repeat precisely the words he was about to say, and say them to the Kallah (bride).


He said, "Harei at Mikudeshet Li, you are married to me", and the Chattan said the words. Then Rav Yaakov Tzvi continued, but instead of saying, "K'dat Moshe V'Yisrael", according to the laws of Moshe and Yisrael", Rav Yaakov Tzvi said, "K'dat Kaiser Wilhelm the Great!"

There was an immediate uproar when he said these words, and the parents demanded that he explain why he did not say "K'dat Moshe V'Yisrael."

Rav Yaakov Tzvi calmly explained that this wedding was not "K'dat Moshe V'Yisrael", since according to Torat Moshe, a Kallah must prepare herself in the Jewish way. He said, "this wedding and even my presence here was purely due to the insistence of the Kaiser, so I made sure to use the correct and appropriate words, and attributed the wording to the Kaiser, because they in fact belong to him!"

They tried to persuade him to proceed with the ceremony, but Rav Yaakov Tzvi refused. Without any other options, the wedding was cancelled and rescheduled for a later date, when the Kallah had agreed to make all the proper preparations. And at the Chupah, Rav Yaakov Tzvi proudly officiated and said the words, "K'dat Moshe V'Yisrael!"

Reprinted from an email of Torah U'Tefilah.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Shelach Lecha

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	7:06	8:24	9:00
Tel Aviv	7:21	8:27	
Haifa	7:14	8:28	
Be'er Sheva	7:22	8:25	



Meet the World's Only Hasidic Bagpipe Player

By Jenny Powers

Not every bagpipe-playing altar boy considering joining the priesthood grows up to be a Hasidic Jew - but Ian Sherman did.

Ian, known today in many circles by his Hebrew name Ephraim Eliyahu, was born to a Scottish Catholic mother and an Eastern European Jewish father, and was raised in Goshen, New York.

Brought up Catholic, Sherman was christened and baptized at an early age, later serving as an altar boy. His mother's older sister was a nun, which always fascinated him as a child.

In third grade, Sherman's parents enrolled him in a Catholic school.

It was two years later when he heard about a local place offering bagpipe lessons and signed up.

By the time he was a teen, he played well enough to be invited to perform at weddings and funerals. Around the same time, he considered enrolling in Dom Bosco, a prep school that funneled boys into the seminary and priesthood, but decided against it in the end - instead planning to go to Hunter College for a nursing degree. "I was only at Hunter to get a nursing degree because firefighters need a second job to make ends meet, and carpentry wasn't my thing," he says now.

Though carpentry may not have been his thing, when his friend Larry invited him to help build a sukkah at the local Chabad House, he agreed.

It was there he met Rabbi Dov Yonah Korn and his wife Sarah, who would later become his mentors.

"Over time it was clear to me that Orthodox Judaism was where I belonged in the world," Sherman says, adding, "Before I had a lot of questions, there seemed to be a lot of holes and things didn't make sense. Judaism washed all those questions away for me. Finally, I could take the spiritual and make it practical in my everyday life. I now had the mystical along with the theoretical."

After a heart-to-heart conversation with his concerned mother and getting her blessing,

Sherman took on a series of time-consuming and laborious studies for eighteen months. In 2006, two days before Chanukah, he became an Orthodox Jew.

Many things in Sherman's life have changed since his conversion. For instance, as he became more observant and grew out his beard, he had to give up his volunteer firefighter position and his dream of joining the FDNY because he says his full beard precludes him from wearing the breathing mask of a firefighter because it cannot seal around his face. Nursing has become his passion now.

While life may have taken an unexpected turn in the religion department, Sherman is not alone. His wife of nine years, Tara was born into an Irish Catholic family and like Sherman, became drawn to Judaism in college and decided to convert.

One thing that hasn't changed though is his love of music and playing the bagpipes. Sherman says he "still plays mostly traditional Scottish tunes, as Jewish music doesn't usually fit in the bagpipes very narrow nine note range."

While it may seem unusual to see a Hasidic Jewish man in a kilt playing the bagpipes, Sherman is quick to tell you he's not the only member of the tribe to do so, referencing another one of his mentors Rabbi Avraham Bloomensteil of Dallas, Texas along with a few others he's heard of which include a husband and wife duo, a man informally known as "the Crown Heights bagpiper" and even a guy he says plays competitively.

At the Class of 2018 Hunter College Graduation ceremony, Sherman took on two distinct roles. He was a proud graduate, having now earned a Nurse Practitioner Masters and Doctorate of Nursing Practice, and he was also a performer, playing a tune called "The Rowan Tree" on his bagpipes for the crowd of nearly two thousand graduates and their guests at Radio City Music Hall.

Between his studies, nursing career, a wife and three year old son and another child on the way, there's not much time to practice the bagpipes. "Even if I did have the time, I don't think my neighbors would particularly appreciate it," he said. "But it's like riding a bike. I just dust off the cobwebs, pick it up and get back on it."

Reprinted from email of The Forward.

People are like trees. This is a message we can derive from this week's Parsha.

Moshe was sending the 12 spies into the Holy Land and he gave them a list of items to notice and to report back on, one of which was 'ה'יש בה עץ אם אין', find out please, he said, 'whether there is or is not a tree in the Land'.

Now what sense can we make of this? Moshe surely knew there were thousands upon thousands of trees in the Land of Canaan.

But according to our tradition, actually what he meant was, find out if there is a person who is like a tree. A person of stature, a person who everyone looks up to, a person through whose merits the Canaanites might survive.

So, therefore, Moshe wanted us to know that a great individual is like a wonderful tree. In this spirit, there is a fascinating anecdote in the Gemarah in Mesechet Ta'anit (5b), it's about a traveler who is walking through the desert, he hadn't had sustenance for a number of days and fortuitously he came across an oasis. In the midst of it, there was a lovely, luscious, beautiful fruit tree with a stream of water alongside it. He immediately ate of its fruit. He drank from the water and then he rested in the shade of the boughs. And when he woke up feeling fully rejuvenated and refreshed, he turned to the tree and he said 'אילן אילן במה אברכך', 'Oh tree, tree, how can I bless you?' I'd like to give you a Brachah, you have been so good to me!

But then he had a problem. What can I bless you with? That you would have lovely fruit - you have already got it. A lovely source of water - it is there. That you will provide shelter and shade - you do that.

And then a thought crossed his mind and he said 'יהי רצון יהוה כמותך שכל נטיעות שנוטעין ממך יהיו כמותך', 'May it be the will of God that all trees planted with your seed will be just like you'.

I believe that this is a very apposite blessing for our times. Thank God, we are blessed with so many trees, so many outstanding, wonderful people, walking in the footsteps of their ancestors, keeping Torah law.

May it be the will of Heaven, that their children and grandchildren and great grandchildren will be just like them. To embrace a life of Torah and Mitzvot, to appreciate the great legacy that is theirs and in turn, to guarantee that they too will be wonderful and outstanding trees, to produce a flow of outstanding generations to come. And let's pray for the soldiers, police and medical professionals protecting us and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, sweet and happy Shabbat.

שלח לך

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The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 3
MITZVOT ASEH: 2
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 1

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 119
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1540
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5820

HAFTORA: Yehoshua 2:1 - 24

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Tammuz.
Rosh Chodesh - Thursday & Friday, June 10 & 11, 2021.

This week we study Chapter 3 of Pirkei Avot